

Khaleda, Huda, Altaf yet to submit tax papers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson and immediate past prime minister Khaleda Zia and some other high profile BNP leaders did not submit the statement papers of their wealth, income and expenditure as well as income tax returns within the scheduled deadline of Wednesday.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia did not submit the statement papers to the respective Returning Officers (RO) in Savar, Dinajpur and Barisal Sadar constituencies, reports our correspondent.

Some high profile BNP leaders including former minister Nazmul Huda (Dohar), Altaf Hossain Chowdhury (Patuakhali-1) and former Army chief Md Mahbubul Rahman did not submit their statement papers to the concerned ROs.

"We are yet to receive the statement papers of Khaleda Zia and Nazmul Huda," said returning officer Mohammad Hanif, who is also the deputy commissioner of Dhaka.

"We will inform the concerned election officials to take actions against those who did not submit the papers," he said.

ERSHAD'S CASE

Hearing on arguments adjourned until Jan 18

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday adjourned hearing on arguments of a gold smuggling case filed against former president and Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad till January 18 following a time petition by the prosecution lawyers.

Judge SM Mujibur Rahman of the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order after the prosecution lawyers submitted a petition seeking an adjournment of the arguments saying they could not make preparation for the hearing.

However, Ershad was not present in the court yesterday though

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Seven more die of cold

STAR REPORT

The sunny weather in most parts of the country yesterday could not fade away the cold wave that claimed seven more lives in Satkhira, raising the death toll to 159 people across the country.

Rajshahi recorded minimum temperature of 6.4 degrees Celsius yesterday from 7.5 degrees on Tuesday showing a gradual fall in temperature as the cold wave continues to make life difficult there.

The met office announced mild to moderate cold wave may continue over Rajshahi, Khulna,

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CTG PORT

Container congestion reaches a new high

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The container congestion at Chittagong port surpassed all previous records yesterday and the port authorities fear it would take at least a couple of weeks to clear the jam even if the country's political situation remained calm.

According to port officials, the container congestion at the port is now beyond their control. Never had the port faced such an awkward situation, they said stressing the need for a programme to clear the jam and bring the situation under control.

The port yard is crammed with over 20,000 TEUs (twenty equivalent units) of import containers against the capacity 14,500 TEUs. There is hardly any space left for keeping the arriving containers at the yard, they said.

Nine ships are in the jetties discharging goods while around

two dozen more are at the outer anchorage waiting for permission to berth.

Meanwhile, shipping companies, disappointed with Chittagong port's container and vessel congestion, are diverting their vessels to other routes as they suffer huge losses.

At least four feeder vessels, which used to operate from Chittagong to Singapore, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, have diverted to other routes. A number of the feeder vessels have also been chartered elsewhere as they were incurring losses while plying Chittagong bound routes, sources said.

The number of feeder vessels operating on this route increased to 49 earlier but it fell to 43. Now, there are 39 feeder vessels operating, according to sources.

The feeder vessel operators earlier decided not to carry any perishable goods on Chittagong

bound routes as the turn-around time for their ships was too long. They were incurring huge losses due to this, sources said.

Each ship had to wait several weeks in order to discharge its cargo incurring losses over \$10,000 per day. The feeder vessel operators are also considering imposing a congestion surcharge on Chittagong bound cargo.

Sources said the cargo handling at the port started following the end of 72-hour blockade programme but the huge congestion of containers at the port yard will take some time to clear.

Bangladesh Jute Spinners' Association (BJS) yesterday expressed its concern over the recently announced political programme that include blockades and hartals, as the programmes would lead the country's economy "to the brink of collapse".

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SHIFTING OF POLL

BGMEA directors argue over making request to Iajuddin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The directors of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) locked in a heated debate at a press conference yesterday on the question of making an appeal to the government for shifting the date of general election from January 22.

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Mokhles now pushes books for schools

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

The Narayanganj district administration recommended different school authorities to include books published by a Niloy Prokashoni in their booklists as Mokhlesur Rahman, advised to President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed, had recommended the publisher.

A number of headmasters and members of school management committees seeking anonymity alleged that on January 8, the additional deputy commissioner (ADC-education) office instructed

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AFP, Washington

US President George W Bush vowed Wednesday to crack down on Iranian and Syrian meddling in Iraq and boost defence measures in the Middle East to beef up regional security.

Bush told a war-weary US public that he accepts blame for strategic blunders in Iraq and that he is ordering 21,500 more

US troops into battle.

"The situation in Iraq is unacceptable to the American people, and it is unacceptable to me," he said in a speech nearly four years into the conflict.

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Ex-BNP MP Pintu granted bail in attempted murder case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Former BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu and eight others yesterday obtained bail in an attempted murder case filed against them in December last year.

Metropolitan Magistrate Quamrunnahar granted them bail upon a bond of Tk 5,000 each with two guarantors after Pintu and others along with their lawyers appeared before the court and sought bail.

The others receiving bail are Shahin, Jasim, Mohammad Ullah Palash, Shiplu, Hasu, Ali Hossain, Khokan alias Roxy Khokan and Kala Alamgir.

According to the prosecution, a

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Afghan, Nato forces kill up to 150 militants

(1.2 miles) from the Pakistan border in Barmal district. Afghan ground forces also attacked, he said.

"Initial battle damage estimates indicate as many as 150 insurgents were killed," Isaf's statement said.

The Afghan defence ministry put the toll at around 80.

Isaf said that Pakistani military liaison officers were kept fully informed throughout the operation.

The strikes came as Afghan, Pakistani and Isaf commanders met in Islamabad to coordinate efforts against insurgents fighting for the hardline Islamist Taliban movement driven from power in Kabul in late 2001.

The insurgent death toll is one of the highest in a strike in the nearly five-year campaign against

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Criminal killed in 'shootout' with Rab

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A criminal was killed in an encounter with the members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in Kaliganj upazila of Jhenidah district early yesterday.

He was identified as Eakabar Hossain alias Kala, 48, son of Late Hatem Ali of Natopara village under the upazila.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-6, Jhenidah, arrested Kala at his house at around 10:00am on Wednesday. Following his confessional statement, the Rab team took Kala to a place near Talian School ground at around 1:30am yesterday to recover hidden firearms and arrest his accomplices.

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Rejoinder, our reply

The Power Development Board (PDB) in a rejoinder on Tuesday to The Daily Star report headlined "PDB Rental Plan for 15 years, 6 out of 7 Power deals set to go to pro-BNP men" published on January 6 contradicted some parts of the story.

It said the sponsors who were

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Prayer Timing

January 12		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-36	5-40
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation



Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) men guard Nassar Group head office on Tejgaon-Gulshan Link Road in the capital yesterday, a day after angry garment workers went on a rampage there.



PHOTO: STAR

A large number of people in a bid to get their tickets to Saudi Arabia gather in front of an airlines office at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka yesterday as there were inadequate number of flights to the kingdom.

Bush vows action on Iran, Syria

Beefs up defence in ME, accepts blame for blunders

AFP, Washington

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